Aile

Acquisition et interaction en langue étrangère

Aile... Lia 1 | 2009
Au croisement de différents types d'acquisition : pourquoi et comment comparer ?

Creoles and interlanguages, conclusions and research desiderata: a reply to Plag

Rex A. Sprouse

OpenEdition Journals

Electronic version
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/aile/4527
ISSN: 1778-7432

Publisher
Association Encrages

Printed version
Date of publication: 1 January 2009
Number of pages: 283-301
ISSN: 1243-969X

Electronic reference
Rex A. Sprouse, « Creoles and interlanguages, conclusions and research desiderata: a reply to Plag », *Acquisition et interaction en langue étrangère* [Online], Aile... Lia 1 | 2009, Online since 01 January 2012, connection on 01 May 2019. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/aile/4527

CREOLES AND INTERLANGUAGES, CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH DESIDERATA: a reply to Plag

Rex A. SPROUSE

Abstract

This article responds to Ingo Plag's recent (2008) columns in the *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* in which creoles are discussed as 'conventionalized interlanguages of an early stage' with consideration of inflectional morphology and syntax. Here it is argued that Plag's traditional conception of transfer coupled with his uncritical acceptance of Pienemann's (1998, 2005) Processability Theory as a theory of interlanguage development make it difficult to offer a rigorous assessment of the basic claim. This article offers several critiques of Plag's argumentation and claims that Schwartz & Sprouse's (1996) Full Transfer/Full Access model offers accounts that are at least as satisfactory as those offered by Processability Theory. Nevertheless, while embracing Plag's Interlanguage Hypothesis, this article calls for quantitatively and qualitatively more ambitious studies of both interlanguage development and creole formation, based on typologically driven constellations of L1s/substrates and the Target Languages/lexifiers.

Keywords: creoles, interlanguages, transfer, Processability Theory, Full Transfer/Full Access.

1. Renewed interest in creoles as interlanguages

By all accounts, recent years have seen renewed interest in the classic question of the relationship between pidgin/creole formation and second

language (L2) acquisition (for recent studies, see Kouwenberg & Patrick 2003; Lefebvre *et al.* 2006; Lumsden 1999; Michaelis 2008; Mufwene 2008; Plag 2008a; 2000b, 2009;[1] Siegel 2008; and Sprouse 2006; classic studies include Andersen 1983; Mufwene 1990; Odlin 1992; Schumann 1978; among others). Underlying this interest is a recognition (*pace* Bickerton 1981) that creole genesis is fundamentally a special case of L2 acquisition. Whereas Bickerton's model of creole formation centers on children, filling in substantial gaps in their fragmentary input with the guidance of Universal Grammar, the current range of mainstream approaches to creole genesis focus on adults developing an interlanguage despite limited input and an overwhelming sense of alienation toward the input-providers.

Plag offers perhaps the most transparent formulation of the general hypothesis that creole formation is rooted in L2 acquisition:

(1) Plag's Interlanguage Hypothesis[2]
Creoles are conventionalized interlanguages of an early stage. (Plag 2008a: 115)

Of course, it is necessary then to explicate two further questions, listed in (2)

(2) a. What is the basis of the conventionalization that occurs?
b. How do early interlanguages differ from more advanced ones?

The reference to conventionalization (2a) reminds us that creoles are conceptualized as the languages of a community of speakers, not the idiolectal variety of a single learner. Furthermore, despite the existence of variation and change in all languages, there is a relative stability in established creoles. Put differently, established creoles exhibit variation and change on roughly the same order as do other living languages,[3] not on the order of developing interlanguages. The restriction to early interlanguages in (2b) focuses on the stages of interlanguage

---

1. Plag (2008a, 2008b) are the first two installments of a planned four-part series on *Creoles as interlanguages*. As of this writing, the third installment has appeared as Plag (2009) and a fourth installment on word formation is anticipated shortly. The present article focuses exclusively on inflectional morphology and syntax.
2. Plag recognizes that the Interlanguage Hypothesis as stated in (1) is almost certainly too narrow for creole languages with a couple of centuries of history behind them, since just as any other natural language, a creole is subject to a range of ongoing processes of variation and change.
3. This is, of course, not to deny the existence of significant variability during the period of initial creole formation or of creole *continua* in a number of creole-speaking societies.

development before the consistent and sustained exposure to Target Language (TL) input enables learners to acquire features such as adjective endings, subtle differences between different past tenses, etc. I would suggest, however, that a more relevant distinction might well be instructed L2 acquisition vs. (pure) contact L2 acquisition. The latter is of course the context for typical creole formation and it differs sharply from the input and motivation rich classroom environment, where part of the role of instruction is to draw the learner's attention to aspects of the input that might otherwise go unnoticed.

2. Processability Theory and transfer

Plag identifies four central properties typically exhibited by creoles and offers accounts of these properties within a particular model of L2 acquisition, *viz*., Pienemann's (1998, 2005) Processability Theory. The basic claim of Processability Theory is that only those surface patterns that a learner is able to process can be acquired. Processability Theory places constraints on the potential role and timing of transfer as well as the unfolding of L2 development in general, by claiming that L2 grammar construction is tied to the development of L2 processing: Learners can acquire only that which they can process. While this is no doubt true at some level, Processability Theory also assumes that the L2 processor must be built up incrementally and that there are certain steps of increasing complexity that guide this development.

An alternative to this view is that the sentence processor is guided at all times by the grammar (whether L1 or L2). For example, Dekydtspotter (2001) develops a model of a Universal Parser which acts as an algorithm to yield a processor based on a given fixing of the parameters of Universal Grammar (in the sense of Chomsky 1986). From this it would follow, on the assumption of a Full Transfer hypothesis such as Schwartz & Sprouse's (1996) Full Transfer/ Full Access model that parsing does not guide transfer in early interlanguage, but rather transfer guides parsing.

The generative-based L2 acquisition literature, with its extremely rich empirical and theoretical treatment of transfer,[4] is essentially ignored by Plag. Apart from the dismissal of the diverse hypotheses about the degree of transfer found in the generative L2 literature, Plag's columns fail to engage with the reconsideration and redefinition of transfer that occurred within the generative tradition in the 1990s. (See e.g. Eubank & Schwartz 1996; Schwartz 1995.)

4. For a reasonably recent treatment of transfer within the generative second language acquisition literature, see White (2003).

Specifically, transfer came to be seen as the extent to which the already existing L1 grammar defines the L2 initial state of grammatical development. That is, transfer was no longer seen as a kind of behavior *per se*. Rather, it was reconceptualized purely in terms of mental representations. It is true enough that these mental representations underlie linguistic behavior, but these representations will not necessarily give rise to production data 'immediately.' Transfer in this new technical sense is no longer seen as a strategy (*pace* Jordens & Kellerman 1978), but rather as a genuinely 'automatic' psycholinguistic response to exposure to input from a new language that reaches a threshold and triggers the genesis of a new mental grammar.

Plag's (2008b) discussion of transfer is grounded in the earlier essentially behaviorist conception of *transfer*, rather than its more recent cognitive interpretation.[5] That is, Plag sees transfer not as the extent to which abstract grammatical properties of the L1 grammar form the basis for the initial state of interlanguage development, but rather as the extent to which surface patterns found in the L1 grammar can be found at various stages of the interlanguage. Assuming Pienemann's Processability Theory, Plag understands transfer to include the emergence of L1 surface patterns only at the point in interlanguage development where these patterns have become 'processable.' Plag approvingly cites Bickerton's (1984: 183) view that transfer is an elusive phenomenon, because even if one observes similarities between the L1 and the interlanguage, one must also rule out that the phenomenon under consideration does not represent

5. In the spirit of Processability Theory (and its corollary, *the Structurally Moderated Transfer Hypothesis*), Plag seeks to downplay the role of transfer in second language acquisition. In doing so, he relies on Håkonsson *et al*.'s (2002) study of the verb-second phenomenon in the interlanguage of Swedish-speaking learners of German. In this study, which followed a rather vaguely described interview format, the participants produced many subject-initial utterances and a limited number of verb-third utterances at an early stage of interlanguage development. Håkonsson *et al.* claim that this shows that verb-second does not transfer, because it is too difficult for early learners to process. However, Bohnacker (2006) shows that this study is essentially irrelevant to L2 acquisition *sensu stricto*, because for every single participant in Håkonsson *et al.*'s study, German was in fact the L3, not their L2. Every single participant had studied English in school before and during their study of German. Thus, the observed verb-third pattern could be attributed to transfer from English. Furthermore, Bohnacker's study shows that when native speakers of Swedish acquire German as a genuine L2, they straightforwardly exhibit transfer of the verb-second phenomenon. We set aside here further considerations of the sequential acquisition of multiple nonnative languages.

a universal of interlanguage development. In fact, Schwartz & Sprouse (1996), operating with the newer cognitively based understanding of transfer, offer a different approach. Imagine groups of L1 speakers of typologically diverse languages acquiring a given TL. Schwartz & Sprouse propose that the most straightforward evidence for transfer would be differential developmental paths among these groups. On the assumption that all groups receive quantitatively and qualitatively the same sort of TL input and that they all share the same basic cognitive capacity for L2 acquisition, the only factor remaining to account for typologically linked differences in development would be the relevance of different starting points, *i.e.* transfer.[6]

3. Plag's four morphosyntactic properties

Plag's (2008a, 2008b) four morphosyntactic properties typical of creoles, are listed in (3):

(3) a. general absence of 'contextual' inflection (roughly, spell-outs of uninterpretable features in the sense of Chomsky (1995), or inflection that does not make an independent contribution to the meaning of a linguistic expression, but rather is the exponent of an agreement or government relation), as opposed to 'inherent' inflection, which expresses independent elements of meaning such as tense of a verb, number of a noun, or degree of an adjective.[7]

---

6. An anonymous reviewer states that the European Science Foundation project of the 1980s and 1990s fulfilled this research design and found at best inconsistent evidence for transfer, leading to the conclusion some domains are more susceptible to transfer than others. The reviewer offers the example of the acquisition of French by speakers of Arabic and Spanish. The claim is that the two groups differ significantly in their acquisition of the syntax of Noun Phrases, but not in their acquisition of negation. It would exceed the scope of this paper to offer a full response to this claim. Here I will have to restrict myself to a point of logic: Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. The mere fact that a given study does not detect effects of transfer does not indicate that the initial state of the learners was not the equivalent of their L1 grammars. We cannot know a priori how long that initial state will persist in any particular case of interlanguage development. The case for (any particular degree of) transfer (that is, partial or full) is to be made by the preponderance of evidence from a wide range of L1-TL configurations and a wide range of linguistic phenomena.
7. See Roberts & Bresnan (2008) for a recent discussion of the relevance of the inherent vs. contextual inflectional morphology distinction in pidgins.

b. immediate availability of either Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) or Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) as 'basic word orders.'
c. yes/no interrogative formation with intonation alone or with clause-peripheral (initial or final) interrogative particles; constituent question formation with *wh*-fronting, but no concomitant fronting of the finite verb or auxiliary to second position.
d. immediately preverbal negation in many creoles, but in Berbice Dutch Creole clause-final negation as well as more complex negation patterns are attested, while Palenquero exhibits an alternation between preverbal and clause-final negation.

For each of these four properties, Plag offers an account compatible with Processability Theory/Developmentally Moderated Transfer Hypothesis, generally with direct or indirect reference to the five (Table 4) or six (Tables 5 and 6) stages of processing development dictated by Processability Theory. Since the Plag's Interlanguage Hypothesis, (1) above, refers to interlanguages 'of an early stage,' Plag's task here is to show that the four phenomena fall within what can be expected of learners who have not passed Stage 3. Since subject-verb agreement requires the exchange of information across phrases in the sense of Processability Theory, it is expected to emerge only later in interlanguage development and hence not to be found in (most) creoles. On the other hand, since either VO or OV allows for the exchange of information of verb and the object for which it selects within a phrase (VP), neither order is seen as difficult to acquire. Intonation alone, clause-peripheral particles, and simple *wh*-fronting are available at a processing stage earlier than the fronting of the auxiliary or the finite verb. Finally, preverbal negation is considered a typical phenomenon in early (English) interlanguage development and thus it is not surprising that this pattern predominates in creoles, according to Plag.

4. Alternative accounts within Full Transfer/Full Access

We turn now to establishing the existence of alternative accounts for each of these phenomena as presented by Plag. In each case, however, the critique will not rest simply with the existence of an alternative account. Rather, we will attempt to offer a more rigorous approach to the study of the phenomenon at hand. These remarks will necessarily be of a speculative nature, and it should be recognized that finding the constellation of substrates and lexifier languages might be difficult or impossible. It is also possible that particular studies indeed already exist that partially or fully meet the conditions called for, although

their relevance for the Interlanguage Hypothesis might be implicit rather than explicit.

4.1. Paucity of contextual inflectional morphology in creoles

The relative paucity of contextual inflectional morphology in creoles has often led the linguistically naïve to view such languages as 'primitive' or to point to creole formation as incomplete L2 acquisition. Perhaps the point should be made that this is not the only possible perspective. Roberts & Bresnan (2008) have recently pointed out that in some cases pidgins exhibit more inflectional morphology than creoles typically do. This suggests that deflection may be the result of further linguistic development, rather than simply incomplete acquisition. The overwhelming direction of language change in the Indo-European languages, the language family whose history has been most thoroughly investigated, has been in the direction of deflection over the centuries. As pointed out by Borer & Rohrbacher (2002) for the child L1 acquisition, the absence of inflectional morphology in production reveals significant sophistication in the child's abstract analysis of input. That is, in order to omit inflection in their production, children must somehow be analyzing input words into *base* plus *inflection*. Otherwise, one would expect an essentially random distribution of inflectional morphology, including its overuse. In Poeppel & Wexler's (1993) study of the Andreas (an L1 German child at 25 months) corpus, both finite and nonfinite verbs appear as the sole verbs in main clauses. However, the distribution is by no means random: With overwhelming (and statistically highly significant) regularity, Andreas places finite verbs in the clausal position where finite verbs belong and nonfinite verbs in the clausal position where nonfinite verbs are appropriate in adult German. In their study of spontaneous production data from two Arabic-French learners and two Romance-German learners (all untutored learners) in L2 acquisition, Prévost & White (2000) found a different pattern of 'errors': These adult learners used inflected verb forms only in syntactic contexts requiring inflected forms, while they extended the use of nonfinite forms from contexts requiring such to contexts requiring inflected forms. Prévost & White analyze this as a strategy employed by learners when they experience difficulty accessing the appropriate inflectional form. All of these cases point to child and adult learners who underuse finite verbal inflection, but do so in non-random patterns revealing underlying knowledge of abstract structures associated with the use of inflection.

It bears mention here that the generative L2 acquisition literature has offered a rich body of competing theories regarding the status of contextual

inflection. In his Linear Sequencing Strategies model, Meisel (1997) claims that adult second language learners have lost the ability to distinguish between finite and nonfinite verb forms, a claim that would seem to predict a fairly random distribution of (correctly and incorrectly) inflected verb forms together nonfinite and bare-stem forms. Perhaps at the other end of the spectrum lies Epstein *et al.*'s (1996) No Transfer/Full Access model, which would discount any particular role for the L1 grammar in L2 acquisition, while maintaining that all of the properties, options, possibilities, and mechanisms available to the child L1 learner are (still) available to the adult learner. On this view, one would expect adults to have the ability for ultimate attainment of TL-like inflectional morphology. Yet another highly influential view is Hawkins & Chan's (1997) Failed Functional Features Hypothesis. According to this approach, those uninterpretable functional features (essentially, the abstract entities underlying contextual inflection) that are instantiated in the L1 grammar transfer (and learners can readily identify their spell-outs in TL input), but functional features not instantiated in the L1 grammar are lost for purposes of adult L2 acquisition. While advanced adult learners may develop strategies that allow them to approximate in production to the TL's inflectional patterns, there will be no genuine acquisition of these aspects of inflection. Schwartz & Sprouse's (1996) Full Transfer/Full Access model predicts that features instantiated in the L1 will transfer and that further acquisition, guided by Universal Grammar, could in principle result in the acquisition of 'new' functional features and their TL spell-outs. Even on this assumption, however, as discussed by Haznedar & Schwartz (1997) and Prévost & White (2000), surface inflection may sometimes be 'missing' due to difficulties in accessing it.

Recently, Lardiere (2009) has pointed out how difficult the task of acquiring TL-like inflection is likely to be, (even) on the assumption of Full Transfer/Full Access. This is because cross-linguistically, (both inherent and contextual) inflectional features are bundled differently. For example,[8] many languages have a [+PLURAL] feature for nominal expressions. In some languages, this is marked solely on the head Noun. In English, demonstratives exhibit obligatory agreement (4), but the definite article does not. In the Romance languages, however, the definite article also exhibits number agreement (5).

(4) English
a. the book
b. the books
c. these/*this books

8. These are not the examples that Lardiere (2009) herself uses.

(5) Spanish
a. el libro
the book
b. los/*el libros
the.PLURAL/the.SINGULAR books
c. estos/*este libros
these/this books

Languages like Russian do not have definite articles. In Welsh, plural inflection is obligatorily suppressed on the Noun preceded by a numeral (6).

(6) Welsh
a. llyfr book
b. llyfrau books
c. saith llyfr
seven book
'seven books'
d. *saith llyfrau
seven books

This pattern is found in many of the world's languages, sometimes optionally sometimes obligatorily. In Russian, the numeral 'one' is followed by a singular Noun, the numerals 'two,' 'three,' and 'four' are followed by a Noun in the genitive singular, and the other numerals are followed by a Noun in the genitive plural.[9] Finally, let us consider two languages in which the definite article is realized as a suffix. In Icelandic, a plural definite noun is easily segmented into Noun-PLURAL-DEFINITE (7), whereas in Norwegian, PLURAL and DEFINITE fuse into a single ending (8).

(7) Icelandic
a. bíl
car
'car,' 'a car'
b. bíl -inn
car - DEFINITE
'the car'
c. bíl -ar
car - PLURAL
'cars'

9. Note, however, that a numeral such as 'twenty-four' counts a 'four' in this calculation and is thus followed by a Noun in the genitive singular.

d. bíl -ar -nir
car - PLURAL- DEFINITE
'the cars'

(8) Norwegian
a. bil
car
'car'
b. bil -en
car- DEFINITE
'the car'
c. bil -er
car- PLURAL
'cars'
d. bil -ene
car- PLURAL/DEFINITE
'the cars'

In the Icelandic example (7d), the suffix *–ar* is the spell-out of the feature [+PLURAL] and the suffix *–nir* is the contextually required (masculine, nominative, plural) spell-out of the feature [+DEFINITE]. In the Norwegian example, (8d), on the other hand, it is not possible to further segment the suffix *–ene*, which is the contextually required (common gender) spell-out of the feature bundle [+PLURAL, +DEFINITE].

These sorts of examples could be multiplied many times over. Their relevance for L2 acquisition is this: In a large number of cases, if acquisition of TL-like inflection is to be achieved, the learner must 'do' more than simply 'have access to' the inflectional features realized in the TL. On the assumption of Full Transfer, the learner must break down the feature bundles employed in her L1, add whatever 'new' features the TL requires, reassembly the features into the organizational structures required by the TL, and associate the TL feature bundles with their appropriate spell-outs. The patterns inherent to the L1 may be helpful, neutral, or even misleading in this process.

In order to explore the acquisition of inflectional systems fully, we need empirical studies matching and crossing L1/substrates with TLs/lexifiers with a range of inflectional patterns. At the moment, our sample is very seriously skewed toward languages with rather minimal to light contextual inflection systems, including many with little or no subject-verb agreement (English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, West African languages, etc.). Of course, creolists cannot cause new creole languages to come into existence, and L2 acquisitionists may

find it very challenging to identify (particularly, untutored) learner populations whose L1-TL constellations exhibit just the right constellation of properties. Furthermore, it is likely to be the case that most genuine second language learners in any given society will be learners of the same second language, and it will not due here to substitute in third language learners, as illustrated by the Håkansson *et al.* (2002) debacle. It does seem incumbent on both research communities, however, to strive for both depth and breadth of typological coverage. It surely cannot come as much of a surprise that native speakers of a language with no subject-verb agreement (many West African languages or Chinese) might not produce the minimal (and functionally vacuous) subject-verb agreement found in English, for example. Careful study of a much wider sample is needed before we can be reasonably certain about the patterns and mechanisms of inflection in interlanguage development, about inflection in creole development, and about whether the latter is merely a (perhaps not so) special case of the former.

4.2. SVO and SOV as 'basic word order options'

It is difficult to understand the force of Plag's discussion of SVO and SOV as 'basic word order options.' In the context of this discussion, Plag (2008b: 319) lists five creoles (Haitian, Sranan, Palenquero, Negerhollands, and Berbice Dutch), all of which he characterizes as 'S AUX VO.' Plag characterizes the substrate of each as allowing 'S AUX VO', except for Eastern Ijo, the substrate for Berbice Dutch, which is characterized as 'SOV.' The substrate of Haitian and Sranan, Gbe, is characterized as 'S AUX VO / OV' without further explanation. The lexifiers of Haitian, Sranan, and Palenquero (French, English, and Spanish, respectively) are characterized as 'S AUX VO,' although English also receives the mysterious alternative 'X S AUX V.' Dutch, the lexifier of Negerhollands and Berbice Dutch is characterized as 'V2nd, X AUX SOV.' (It would make better sense of Dutch if 'AUX' here were meant to refer to finite verbs rather than auxiliary verbs, but this is nowhere stated.) Thus, the only creole listed without 'S AUX VO' as the 'basic word order' of the substrate, the lexifier, or both, is Berbice Dutch. There is no suggestion as to how S AUX VO order might have arisen in Berbice Dutch in the absence of this word order pattern in both the substrate and the lexifier. Finally, Plag cites Nagamese as an SOV creole without characterization of either its substrate or its lexifier. Nevertheless, Plag concludes:

> Overall, the interlanguage hypothesis in conjunction with Processability Theory can nicely account for the fact that cross-linguistically in creole languages, we find basic word orders reflecting unmarked alignment, with no conclusive evidence in favor of transfer in this domain. (Plag 2008b: 320)

While it entirely escapes me how any of these facts receive any kind of an 'account,' it is indicative of Plag's unwillingness to confront the rich generative transfer literature. We should first begin with a common misunderstanding of word order transfer echoed by Plag, who states:

> …English learners of Japanese can produce SOV (subject-object-verb) from the time they produce the first sentences, instead of necessarily transferring native SVO (as predicted by the Full Transfer Hypothesis). Plag (2008b: 318)

Assuming Schwartz & Sprouse's (1996) Full Transfer/Full Access model, there is no particular reason to suppose that English-Japanese interlanguage should be characterized by a protracted SVO stage. Every single Japanese clause, other than those consisting of nothing but a subject and a verb, presented to such learners is direct counterevidence to an SVO grammar. On the assumption that post-initial state development is failure-driven, it is very likely that the relevant parameter will be reset virtually immediately. A similar state of affairs applies to languages that are purely prepositional and purely postpositional. Where the evidence is straightforward and robust, even without instruction, rapid development should be expected.

The interesting cases arise when the 'basic word order' of the TL is somewhat more obscure. Here German and Dutch are particularly instructive. German input is potentially confusing because the placement of finite vs. nonfinite verbs is strikingly different in main clauses. In embedded clauses, on the other hand, both finite and nonfinite verbs appear in clause-final (or almost clause-final) position. Consider the familiar paradigm in (9).

(9) a. ... dass Klaus heute Bier trinkt
... that Klaus today beer drinks
'...that Klaus is drinking beer today'
b. … dass Klaus gestern Wein getrunken hat
... that Klaus yesterday wine drunk has
'…that Klaus drank wine yesterday'

(10) a. Klaus trinkt heute Bier.
Klaus drinks today beer
'Klaus is drinking beer today'

b. Klaus hat gestern Wein getrunken.
Klaus has yesterday wine drunk
'Klaus drank wine yesterday.'
c. Heute trinkt Klaus Bier.
today drinks Klaus beer
'Today Klaus is drinking beer.'
d. Gestern hat Klaus Wein getrunken.
yesterday has Klaus wine drunk
'Yesterday Klaus drank wine.'

In (9a) *trinkt*, the finite (and only) verb in the embedded clause, appears in clause-final position. When both a finite and a nonfinite verb co-occur in an embedded clause, as in (9b), the nonfinite verb precedes the finite verb.[10] The examples in (10) illustrate the pattern for matrix clauses, where nonfinite verbs such as *getrunken* in (10b) and (10d) appear in clause-final position. Finite verbs, such as *trinkt* (10a, 10c) and *hat* (10b, 10d) appear in second position. This may be after the subject, as in (10a, 10b), or before the subject, as in (10c, 10d). Although these are highly robust word order patterns, the contingency relationship between form and placement and the so-called verb-second phenomenon illustrated in (10c, 10d) might require a significantly greater quantity and quality of TL input. That is, parameter-resetting may take some time and is thus easier to capture empirically.

A set of studies by Vainikka & Young-Scholten offers a rather compelling demonstration that one can indeed observe the effects of word order transfer in such cases. Vainikka & Young-Scholten (1994) studied 11 adult native speakers of Turkish and 6 adult native speakers of Korean, all acquiring German in an input-weak, untutored context. Both Turkish and Korean are straightforward 'SOV' languages, without any kind of verb displacement to the left. On the basis of hundreds of utterances collected through interviews, in which the utterances were overwhelmingly (S)OV, Vainikka & Young-Scholten conclude that these largely 'fossilized' learners exhibit an early stage with a verb-final Verb Phrase, followed by the emergence of verb movement to the left. Vainikka & Young-Scholten (1996) studied 4 adult native speakers of Italian and 7 adult native speakers of Spanish, again all acquiring German in an input-weak, untutored context. Both Italian and Spanish are straightforward 'SVO' languages (abstracting away from preverbal object clitics). On basis of hundreds of utterances

10. There are also well-defined classes of exceptions to this, where either the finite verb may or must precede certain nonfinite verbs, once there are three or more verbs clustered at the right periphery of a single embedded clause.

collected through interviews, in which the utterances were overwhelmingly (S)VO, Vainikka & Young-Scholten conclude that these largely 'fossilized' learners exhibit an early stage with verb-initial Verb Phrase, followed by the emergence of verb movement to the left. Thus, taken together, the two studies compare the interlanguage development of speakers of typologically distinct languages acquiring the same TL. The sequences differ in precisely the way that the (Full)[11] Transfer hypothesis predicts: early SOV interlanguage for SOV natives and early SVO for the SVO natives.

I suggest that the persistence of the SVO grammar in learners exposed to an SOV language is unlikely to occur unless the underlying SOV structure is obscured by other syntactic phenomena, as is the case precisely with German (and Dutch). That is, the non-Target-like SVO grammar inherited from the Romance speakers' L1s finds 'support' from the robust occurrence of utterances like (10a) in particular, where the verb (*qua* finite verb) is placed to the left of the direct object. In acquiring 'pure' SOV language there is no such potentially misleading evidence in the input.

This leads to the reiteration of the point made at the end of the preceding sub-section. Both L2 acquisition research and creole linguistics would profit greatly from many additional studies matching and crossing the typological properties of the L1/substrate and the TL/lexifier.[12]

---

11. Vainikka & Young-Scholten (1994, 1996) do not actually advocate Full Transfer, but rather Minimal Trees, which claims that the domain of transfer is restricted to lexical categories. Of course, evidence of transfer in lexical categories is also compatible with the Full Transfer hypothesis.
12. I concur with an anonymous reviewer, who states that there may already be a large body of data available for the study of Plag's Interlanguage Hypothesis, stated above in (1). However, it is important to stress that examining these data in this light would not be a trivial task. It can already be challenging to undertake such comparative studies of (instructed) L2 acquisition, in large part because of the dominance of a handful of languages as genuine second languages (as opposed to third, fourth, etc. languages) around the world. In the case of creole studies, the researcher is limited to the existing creoles and cannot creatively match new substrates and lexifiers for an ideal test of a specific hypothesis. This work would also require careful and linguistically sophisticated description and analysis of (often under-described) substrate languages. It would also require careful consideration of the specific historical and sociological context of the creoles under investigation, lest complicating factors (such as school-based decreolization, sustained multilingualism, government-sponsored language planning) go unacknowledged.

4.3. Interrogative formation

Our discussion of interrogative formation will be very brief. Plag points out that many creoles employ intonation with or without (initial or final) interrogative particles to form yes/no interrogatives and *wh*-fronting to form constituent questions. He stresses that fronting of the finite verb or auxiliary to second position in interrogative formation is unattested in creole languages and underscores that this is in accordance with the Developmentally Moderated Transfer Hypothesis. However, one could object that this is only trivially so, since Plag offers no examples of creoles whose substrates exhibit such verb fronting. Once again, a full typological study, to the extent that such is possible, for both L2 acquisition and creole formation to investigate the full range of interrogative syntax including comparisons with L1s/substrates and the TLs/lexifiers.

4.4. Negation

Plag offers a brief survey of six creole languages in his discussion of negation: Haitian, Tayo, Sranan, Negerhollands, Palenquero, and Berbice Dutch. The first four exhibit preverbal negation, while Berbice Dutch exhibits clause-final negation, and Palenquero exhibits preverbal negation, clause-final negation, or a combination of both. Plag characterizes negation in the substrates of Tayo and Negerhollands (Kanak and Kwa, respectively) and the lexifier of Berbice Dutch (Dutch) as 'variable.' He lists three distinct patterns for Palenquero, three for its substrate (Kikongo), and two for its lexifier (Spanish). It is thus difficult, given the limitations of the present article, to offer a coherent discussion of these cases here. Let us focus on Haitian and Sranan, the two creoles for which Gbe is listed as the substrate. The patterns given by Plag are summarized in (11) and (12).

(11) Haitian

a.	Haitian:	NEG	AUX)	V O	
b.	Gbe:	NEG	AUX)	V O	
				V O NEG[13]	
		NEG	V O	NEG	
c.	French	NEG	AUX	NEG V O	
		NEG	V	NEG	O (based on Plag 2008b's (4a), p. 322)

13. Plag (2008b: 322, fn. 8) seems to accept Lefebvre & Brousseau's (2002: 128) claim that the preverbal marker *mà* is the genuine negation marker in Gbe, while the clause-final *ă* is more properly analyzed as marker of the speaker's point of view.

(12) Sranan

a.	Sranan:	NEG	(AUX)	V O	
b.	Gbe:	NEG	(AUX)	V O	
			V O	NEG	
		NEG	V O	NEG	
c.	English:	AUX	NEG	V O	(based on Plag 2008b's (4c), p. 323)

When laid out in this way, a very straightforward transfer account appears obvious for both Haitian and Sranan: the syntax of negation of the creole appears to arise directly from the first pattern listed under the substrate Gbe. On the assumption that the negation marker is to the left of the VP and that Haitian and Sranan do not exhibit raising of the verb from the VP, the analysis is clear. Again, these facts may be compatible with the Developmentally Moderated Transfer Hypothesis; they are certainly also compatible with the Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis.

One of the insights of generative syntax of the past twenty years has been that the 'syntax of negation' often boils down to the syntax of other elements in the clause. That is, the most convincing syntactic analyses often involve the negation marker generated to the left of the VP and not undergoing movement. However, in many languages the finite verb moves to a higher functional head position, and in some languages NP arguments with specific reference must leave the VP before Spell-Out, in both cases moving to the left of the negation marker. On the other hand, some languages exhibit negative concord (e.g. French, Spanish, Russian), while in other languages a second negative constituent 'cancels' the negative force of another negative item (Standard English, German, Swedish). A linguistically sophisticated approach to transfer in L2 acquisition and in creole genesis would have to take the syntax and the semantics of negation into consideration.

5. Summary and conclusions

This article has attempted to engage in an emerging dialogue between L2 acquisition scholars and creole linguists by responding to aspects of Plag's (2008a, 2008b) columns on creoles as 'conventionalized interlanguages of an early stage.' While embracing this basic insight, I have argued that Plag's traditional conception of transfer coupled with his uncritical acceptance of Pienemann's (1998, 2005) Processability Theory as a theory of interlanguage development obfuscate rigorous analysis. I have tried to show that to the extent that a comparison can be made, Schwartz & Sprouse's (1996) Full Transfer/Full

Access model offers accounts that are at least as satisfactory as those offered by Processability Theory. It is hoped that future research will see quantitatively and qualitatively more ambitious studies of both interlanguage development and creole formation, based on driven constellations of L1s/substrates and the Target Languages/lexifiers.

Acknowledgements: many thanks to Laurent Dekydtspotter, Bonnie D. Schwartz, and David Stringer.

REFERENCES

Andersen, R. W. (Ed.). (1983). *Pidgination and Creolization as Second Language Acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Bickerton, D. (1981). *Roots of Language*. Ann Arbor, MI: Karoma Press.

Bickerton, D. (1984). The Language Bioprogram Hypothesis. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* n° 7, 173-221.

Bohnacker, U. (2006). When Swedes begin to learn German: From V2 to V2. *Second Language Research* n° 22, 443-486.

Borer, H. & Rohrbacher, B. (2002). Minding the absent: Arguments for the Full Competence Hypothesis. *Language Acquisition* n°10, 123-175.

Chomsky, N. (1986). *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin and Use*. New York: Praeger.

Chomsky, N. (1995). *The Minimalist Program*. Cambridge, MA: the MIT Press.

Dekydtspotter, L. (2001). The Universal Parser and Interlanguage: Domain-Specific Mental Organization in the Comprehension of *combien* Interrogatives in English-French Interlanguage. *Second Language Research* n° 17, 91-143.

Epstein, S., Flynn, S. & Martohardjono, G. (1996). Second language acquisition: Theoretical and experimental issues in contemporary research. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* n°19, 677-714.

Eubank, L. & Schwartz, B. D. (Eds.). (1996) Special issue, *Second Language Research* n°12 (1).

Håkansson, G., Pienemann, M. & Sayehli, S. (2004). Transfer and typological proximity in the context of L2 processing. *Second Language Research* n°18, 250-273.

Haznedar, B. & Schwartz, B. D. (1997) Are there optional infinitives in child L2 acquisition? *Proceedings of the Annual Boston University Conference on Language Acquisition* 21, 257-268.

Hawkin, R. & Chan, C. Y.-H. (1997) The partial availability of Universal Grammar in second language acquisition: The 'Failed Functional Features Hypothesis.' *Second Language Research* n°13, 187-226.

Jordens, P. & Kellerman, E. (1978). Investigation into the strategy of *transfer* in second language learning. Fifth International Congress of Applied Linguistics.

Kouwenberg, S. & Patrick, P. (Eds.). (2003). *Reconsidering the Role of SLA in Pidginization and Creolization*. Special issue, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* n° 25 (2).

Lardiere, D. (2009). Some thoughts on the contrastive analysis of features in second language acquisition. *Second Language Research* n°25, 173-227.

Lefebvre, C. & Brousseau, A.-M. (2002). *A Grammar of Fongbe*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Lefebvre, C, Jourdan, C. & White, L., (Eds.). (2006) *L2 Acquisition and Creole Genesis: Dialogues*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Lumsden, J. S. (1999). Language acquisition and creolization. In M. DeGraff (Ed.), *Language Creation and Language Change: Creolization, Diachrony, and Development*, 129-158. Cambridge, MA: the MIT Press.

Meisel, J. M. (1997). The acquisition of the syntax of negation in French and German: Contrasting first and second language development. *Second Language Research* n°13, 227-263.

Michaelis, S. (Ed.). (2008). *Roots of Creole Structures: Weighing the Contributions of Substrates and Superstrates*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Mufwene, S. S. (1990). Transfer and the substrate hypothesis in creolistics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* n° 12, 1-23.

Mufwene, S. S. (2008). *Language Evolution: Contact, Competition and Change*. London: Continuum Press.

Odlin, T. (1992). Transferability and linguistic substrates. *Second Language Research* n°8, 171-202.

Pienemann, M. (1998) *Language Processing and Second Language Development: Processability Theory*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Pienemann, M. (2005) An introduction to Processability Theory. In M. Pienemann (Ed.), *Cross-linguistic Aspects of Processability Theory*, 1-60. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Plag, I. (2008a). Creoles as interlanguages: Inflectional morphology. Column. *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* n°23, 114-135.

Plag, I. (2008b). Creoles as interlanguages: Syntactic structures. Column. *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* n°23, 307-328.

Plag, I. (2009). Creoles as interlanguages: Phonology. Column. *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* n°24, 119-138.

Prévost, P. & White, L. (2000). Missing surface inflection or impairment in second language acquisition? Evidence from tense and agreement. *Second Language Research* n°16, 103-133.

Roberts, S. J. & Bresnan, J. (2008). Retained inflectional morphology in pidgins: A typological study. *Linguistic Typology* n°12, 269-302.

Schumann, J. H. (1978) *The Pidginization Process: A Model for Second Language Acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Schwartz, B. D. (1995) Transfer and L2 acquisition of syntax: Where are we now? Plenary address, Second Language Research Forum, Cornell University.

Schwartz, B. D. & Sprouse, R. A. (1994). Word order and nominative case in non-native language acquisition: a longitudinal study of (L1 Turkish) German interlanguage. In T. Hoekstra & B. D. Schwartz (Eds.), *Language Acquisition Studies in Generative Grammar: Papers in Honor of Kenneth Wexler from the 1991 GLOW Workshops*, 317-368. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Schwartz, B. D. & Sprouse, R. A. (1996). L2 cognitive states and the Full Transfer/Full Access model. *Second Language Research* n°12, 40-72.

Siegel, J. (2008) *The Emergence of Pidgin and Creole Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sprouse, R. A. (2006). Full Transfer and Relexification: Second language acquisition and creole genesis. In C. Lefebvre, C. Jourdan & L. White (Eds.), *L2 Acquisition and Creole Genesis: Dialogues,* 169-181. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Vainikka, A. & Young-Scholten, M. (1994). Direct access to X'-Theory: Evidence from Korean and Turkish adults learning German. In T. Hoekstra & B. D. Schwartz (Eds.), *Language Acquisition Studies in Generative Grammar: Papers in Honor of Kenneth Wexler from the 1991 GLOW Workshops*, 265-316. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Vainikka, A. & Young-Scholten, M. (1996). The early stages in adult L2 syntax: Additional evidence from Romance speakers. *Second Language Research* n°12, 140-176.

White, L. (2003). *Second Language Acquisition and Universal Grammar*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Résumé

Cet article discute les positions récentes d'Ingo Plag (2008), parues dans le *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, selon lesquelles les langues créoles seraient des 'interlangues conventionalisées dans leurs premières étapes' en ce qui concerne la morphologie et la syntaxe. Nous défendons ici l'idée que la conception traditionnelle du transfert de Plag ainsi que son adhésion inconditionnelle à la Processability Theory de Pieneman (1998, 2005) comme théorie du développement de l'interlangue rend difficile une évaluation rigoureuse du bien-fondé de ses positions. Dans notre démarche critique de l'argumentation et des affirmations de Plag, nous soutenons que le modèle Full Transfer/Full Access de Schwartz & Sprouse (1996) permet de rendre compte des faits avec autant de pertinence que la Processability Theory. Néanmoins, tout en acceptant l'hypothèse d'interlangue de Plag, cet article souligne la nécessité de s'appuyer sur des études plus ambitieuses sur le plan quantitatif et qualitatif du développement de l'interlangue et de la formation des créoles, à partir de constellations de L1s/substrat et de langues cibles/superstrat typologiquement variées.